



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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teaching we may be able to give our children, besides a firm hold on the vital truths that have come down to us, also an open-minded interest towards the current thought of our day, that they may be able to "try all things and hold fast that which is good." And in dealing with the many difficult questions that must come sooner or later to our children, I think we could help them by showing that science is progressive, not fixed; that the discoveries of to-day may be superseded or enlarged by the discoveries of to-morrow. That God is revealing Himself to us as He did to the Israelites of old, and has been doing to all mankind since time began (1) through men's consciences (spoken of by St. Paul as "those which have no law" (that is, no written revelation) "do by nature the things of the law," etc.); (2) through His prophets, who are the leaders in all science, literature, art, etc., the pioneers among us; (3) through Christ's spirit inspiring our hearts to more love to men, as in the various self-sacrificing and brave deeds we see and the different philanthropic schemes set on foot. That whatever difficulties come to us and even feelings of disbelief, they come from our present imperfect knowledge, and that even if we have to go through our dark hours, we know that no advance has ever been made except through effort and pain, and if we hold fast to our belief in truth and goodness and do not shrink from our duty, God will make all things clearer to us and we shall find that our dark hours are those we look back on as the most precious.

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR GIRLS.

BY NELLIE HARLOW BEER.

A STIRRED discussion was raging a short time ago in the columns of a well-known London "Daily" on "The Education of the Middle Class Girl," and needless to say "High Schools," as representing in concrete form our modern educational theories for females, received the lion's share of praise and blame. Perhaps of all the startling changes which have taken place since the early Victorian era, few have been more startling or more rapid, than those which concern the education of women. The late Sir Walter Besant, in *Fifty Years Ago*, which was published in 1888, remarked that, fifty years ago the higher education of women was like "the snakes in Iceland"—it did not exist. There were of course always the select few, who amid numberless difficulties and discouragements, vindicated the right of woman's *brain* to be trained and cultivated as well as her heart and hands, but these were only *the few*, and they were regarded for the most part with the kind, half pitying, half amused indulgence, we give to an animal of remarkable intelligence, or to a precocious child. It was only at first by slow degrees that the right of women to have as careful and systematic a training as had long been decreed for their brothers was at all recognized, but the idea once firmly engrafted bore rapid fruit. If we wish to realize the difference in woman and woman's ideals our present-day system has made, we have only to compare the types presented to us in the novels of the early fifties, and those which are found in the writings of to-day. The "Amelia Sedley" and "Dora" of Dickens and Thackeray, and the "Valentine" and "Julie" of Besant and Mrs. Humphry Ward, if they could meet in a modern drawing-room, would find almost as much difficulty in sympathising with and understanding each other, as would a Chinese and a European lady, and the difference in their views of life would be due in a great extent to the difference in their early training. The fragile and interesting young woman, who fainted on the least provocation,

was prone to dissolve into tears, and to be sweetly (but exasperatingly) helpless in all save strictly household emergencies, has given place to an exceedingly wide-awake, vigorous, and practical young person, who feels ashamed to confess to hysteria, has an almost boyish shame of weeping in public, and prefers to be treated as a man's comrade, not as his plaything. *Nous avons changé tout cela.* We are not speaking in disparagement of the former ideal, which had undoubtedly many points of superiority to the new, more especially to the new in its present somewhat crude state of growth; we are merely endeavouring to point out the vast difference between them. "Knowledge is now no more a fountain sealed," women look on the world with "larger other eyes" than of yore, and however much we may regret the lost ideal, it is as impossible to replace, as is our childhood's belief in Santa Claus and the fairies. We suppose it will be generally acknowledged that—for good or for ill—it is chiefly the influence of "High Schools" and similar institutions that have wrought this change. In schools such as these, the pioneers of the movement for the advancement of women have striven to embody somewhat of "the spirit of their dream," and some of us think that future generations will owe them a debt of gratitude.

Public School life for girls seems to us to supply just the training necessary to correct the natural defects of the majority of women—surely not one of the least important ends of education. It teaches, we think, just those lessons which are even more needed for those whose lives will be passed in quiet, peaceful homes, than for that ever-increasing class, who must perforce mingle in the fierce struggles of this work-a-day world. More necessary, we say, for the former class than for the latter, inasmuch as the former may neglect them, the others will find some of them, at least, forced upon them by the stern facts of their very existence.

The faculty of acting in combination, *esprit de corps*, the power to set the good of the mass higher than that of the mere individual, are not these just the traits, the lack of which is a continual reproach, kept as a missile ready to fling at the head of the feminine race, whenever it aspires to further liberty! While not entering into the question as to how far

these virtues are, or are not, *inherent* in the sterner sex, no one, we suppose, will deny that they are, at least, much fostered by the training and discipline which our boys have for generations received at the large Public Schools. High Schools are striving to supply just this training and discipline, in of course a much modified degree, to our girls. There is something in the order, the regularity, the corporate life of a girls' High School, something in the knowledge that the school has gone on, and will go on, long after a girl's individual connection with it has ceased, something too in the size of the buildings, though for the most part, "Ugly, I'm sure, you'll confess *them* to be," which helps insensibly to sink the individual in the mass, and to inspire a sentiment akin to the uplifting feeling of "the making of history." A girl learns to rejoice in her own or others' successes, because they redound to "the honour of the school," she learns to exert herself at cricket or hockey, not so much to display her own individual prowess, as that she may help "her side" to win. Surely this in itself is a step in the right direction.

There is also to be taken into account the ennobling influences of the wider sympathy and knowledge of human nature, which a girl learns in the "mixture" of a High School. Women are often deficient in this, partly from the limitations of their home and social life. Men, in their professional and business careers, come in contact with many varieties of character, and their natural power of rating essentials above mere surface refinements is given full play. Women, on the contrary, are veritable Hindoos in their belief in the mighty power of "Caste," and for a woman to be dubbed as "second-rate" is far more to her social detriment than much more heinous sins. In the great "middle-class," as it is called, there seem to be circles within circles, as far as social position is concerned, and too often each circle seems disposed to regard the one immediately below it with the same kind of feeling as the salmon in the *Water Babies* regarded the trout, "as creatures just too much like themselves to be tolerated." No one, who has had much acquaintance with life in small provincial towns, will be disposed to deny that it is anything but gain for the general practitioner's daughter to be forced to see for herself, that the child of a local draper may be as

clever and as well-mannered as she is, and for the daughter of a neighbouring squire to find her match at hockey or tennis in the family of a tenant farmer. This fellowship in games, and friendly rivalry in work, gives a sense of *camaraderie* which nothing else could inspire, and though probably when schooldays are ended the paths of the girls are widely separated, the bond of union is rarely quite lost. The pleasant bonds of school fellowship has helped each small circle to understand the other, and scornful, tolerant indifference on the one side, and half contemptuous envy on the other, give place to a wider and more comprehensive sympathy.

The influence of the mistresses, and above all of the head-mistresses, should, I think, be reckoned as one of the most important factors in the good that High School education has to offer girls. Nearly all the teachers in these schools are women of high attainments, and those who rise to the responsible position of "Heads" are generally women of exceptional character. It is surely no slight advantage for a girl to come under the influence of women such as these, at what is perhaps the most impressionable period of her life. True, it often results in a severe attack of hero-worship, a malady as inevitable for some natures as whooping cough or measles, but at all events it is far healthier for a girl to lavish her adoration on a sensible, high-minded woman, than to cast languishing glances in the direction of a handsome young drawing master, or to cherish a romantic admiration for the latest theatrical celebrity. Moreover, the lives of these ladies furnish a very *necessary* (in a country where statistics assure us there are certainly more women than men) object lesson on the fact, that a woman may have a very happy and useful career, even though she remain an "unappropriated blessing" to the end of her days, and has to do without that, which the poet assures us is, "woman's whole existence."

I will only briefly allude to the one other feature of High School life which makes it so eminently useful as a training for women, and that is the great prominence given to outdoor games. Men are, perhaps, tempted to sacrifice too much time to athletics, women, taken as a whole, are, especially in later life, far too prone to sacrifice needlessly their own health

and nerves, and sometimes those of future generations, by stinting themselves of their proper amount of fresh air and exercise. If a fondness for healthy open air occupations can be implanted early in a girl's breast, it will surely do something to correct this evil tendency.

In the recent controversy, one of the chief complaints brought forward was, that the subjects taught in High Schools were not those best fitted to enable girls to make their own way in life, except, as one writer expressed it, in the way of, "handing down stores of useless knowledge from one generation to another." Of course, if a parent's view of the end and object of "education" (save the mark!) is that a girl should leave school at seventeen or eighteen a finished typist or business woman, no wonder that the studies of a High School girl seem to him to produce a dismal failure. Surely to most of us, however, education means—taken even in its most limited sense—far more than this. It means far more even than the gaining of definite knowledge, it means the training in such habits of thought and observation that a girl on leaving school is fitted to think for herself, and not merely to retail at second-hand the prejudices and opinions of others, fondly imagining them to be her own. (How much that is miscalled *thinking* in the present day is anything but this?) It means the gradual training of all the faculties which will produce a true woman, intelligent, high-souled, broad-minded, with her mental and moral faculties developed to their fullest extent, and her physical development not neglected. If "education" means all this to us, we shall not be disposed to regard High Schools as a failure, however far we may be willing to acknowledge that they fall short in their high endeavours. Even from a commercial point of view, we believe that *in the long run* the girl who has received a High School training will make a greater success than the girl who has been allowed to discard all studies, except those directly bearing on her business career. Latin and science may, it is true, never be called into actual requisition in her later life, but the habit of accuracy, and of observing closely before "rushing at conclusions," which such studies teach, will never wholly leave her, and will help her in the exigencies of commercial, as well as of social life.

Perhaps the two most important objections brought forward against the High Schools, and those which one most frequently hears, are that the manners of the pupils tend to lose their refinement and charm, and that the mental and nervous strain produced by the High School system is too great. If this is the case, however, it seems to prove not so much *the inefficiency of the High Schools* as the *inefficiency of the parents*. One of the greatest mistakes of the present age in educational methods is the proneness of parents to shirk their proper responsibilities. Surely it is for the mother to see the first signs of a girl's strength and nerves being overtired. The teacher at school, who supervises the study of her twenty or thirty girls, naturally suits the work given to the capacities of her form *en masse*. It is the home people who have the best opportunity of marking the listless look, the flagging appetite, or the irritable temper, which show when the eager, ambitious young student is working beyond her strength. It is the mother, not the teacher, who deserves the chief blame, if she is blind to these warnings and does not at once make it clear by word—and by deed if necessary—that no marks and no examination honours are, in her opinion, worth the sacrifice of health. Most teachers, we believe, would feel only gratitude if the mother would work with them in this way, and they would gladly collaborate with her in fitting the back to the burden. Many mothers, however, give no heed to the fatal signs until it is too late, and the teacher is not warned; but when the inevitable break-down follows, she and "the system" must share the blame.

As for manners, doubtless a girl may become slightly more brusque and independent in manner from daily association with a tribe of others, all eager, all generally too much absorbed in work and play to quite appreciate the Emersonian maxim that, "there is always time enough for courtesy," but this brusqueness will in most cases soon wear off. Whether a girl is essentially refined and well-bred, whether she is a "lady" (in the *true* sense), depends almost entirely on the atmosphere and surroundings of her *home*. The parents of rough, ill-mannered children are naturally not anxious to admit this fact, and are glad to throw the blame for want of refinement on the school. If we consider the matter, however,

the thirty hours—and the time is frequently less—which are spent at school, out of the 168 which make up a week, are chiefly taken up by, more or less, silently receiving instruction, and it would be unreasonable to expect them to counteract the influence of the much longer time spent amid the various influences of home and friends. Of course there is the danger of the example of less carefully brought-up companions, but there is no school, "however watched and tended," in which this danger does not exist, and considering the comparatively short time during which the peril need be incurred, the fear of evil results should be very slight. Only, here again, the mother must do her part. It is for her to watch, and to be ready to check firmly, but kindly, those little creeping habits of courtesy which, often hidden carefully at school, are ready to appear in the more unrestrained freedom and laxity of home life. Such a task will demand time and infinite patience, but it is a labour that will be amply repaid.

Here, however, lies the difficulty. Parents do not realise, and are unwilling to realise, their duty in these matters. Family life has suffered and is suffering in the general rush and scramble of the age. Fathers and mothers do not have "time" nowadays to see after their boys and girls. Quiet family evenings at home, with the reading aloud and the work, are not so popular, we fancy, as they once were. Even the good old custom, round which in former years so many tender memories used to cling, of the father and mother gathering their children around them on the Day which was *once* a "day of rest," and telling them the old Bible stories, which for the ears of childhood never seem to lose their charm, seems fast dying out. Schools and teachers are expected to supply the place once given to parents in influencing the lives of the younger generation. It is an *unnatural* expectation and an *impossible* one. Teachers, at their best, can never supply the place in a boy's education, much less in a girl's, which rightfully belongs to the father and mother; at the most they are but *halves of a complete whole*. Alas! that in so many cases the teachers should be so distinctly the "better halves," because they bring to their work a sense of duty and an enthusiasm which nowadays the parent too often lacks. In this respect, we do not seem to have

improved in the last fifty years. The standard of teaching is higher, and our educational ideals are nobler and wiser, but the very fact that these things are amended seems to furnish an excuse to the parents for their own sluggishness. Teachers are doing so much, and are doing it so well, that parents may safely leave them, they appear to think, to do all. The teacher is made the guardian of a girl's health and morals and manners, and if either of these go wrong, the parents soothe their drowsy consciences with an outcry against "the schools" or "the system." They do not appear to understand that, till they themselves rouse up and do *their* part more thoroughly, no one can say we have given a *fair* trial to our present-day system of female education.

[Discussion is invited.—ED.]

"Scale How" Tuesdays.*

HENRY PURCELL.

BY BEATRICE M. GOODE.

HENRY PURCELL was born at a time when music in England was at its lowest ebb. It had reached a high point of brilliancy at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but during the time of the Puritan ascendancy it became very degenerate. In 1643 the cathedral service was suppressed, church music books destroyed, organs taken down, choir men and boys turned adrift, and no music allowed to be sung save plain metrical psalms, and these were performed without harmony by the whole congregation as best they could, unaccompanied by any instrument, and with the words of every line read out by the minister before they were sung. Theatres and places of musical entertainment were closed and no public performance of any sort of music was permitted. By means of all these measures the appreciation of good music was practically destroyed.

All this took place before Cromwell became Protector, so he must not be held accountable for this violent raid upon the art. He was himself fond of music and had a professional musician among the members of his household. The art of music was however on the threshold of a complete revolution, and the music of Purcell stands as it were nicely balanced between the past and the future.

No sooner was the monarchy restored, and with it among other good things the choral services of the Church of England, than composers and executants sprang up on all sides, who set to work to restore to England that musical character which had once been her boast.

Henry Purcell is the greatest and most original genius which the English school has ever produced. He was born

* Our readers may remember our note about "Scale How Tuesdays," in the *Parents' Review* for September, 1903. It is the custom at the House of Education for one or another student to read an appreciation of some favourite author or composer, illustrated by extracts or compositions read or performed by some of those present. The information is of course gathered from various sources. We venture to think that this should be a pleasant custom in families; so a series will be published month by month, in order to familiarise our readers with the plan. Even the younger members will enjoy taking part in the readings.—ED.]